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wood or hombre grande (S.: *wanabaka*) is said to be efficacious in case of snake bites.

The woody rootstock of the China root or cuculmeca, a sort of French brier (S.: *samaldi*, *wasalanaka*) is boiled in water and the decoction is used to clean the blood, and as a preventive against snake bites.

The small "beans" contained in the pod of the pissabed or frijolillo shrub (M.: *sitsitsnya*) are toasted, ground, and used as coffee on account of their diuretic properties; the root of this plant is employed in malarial fever.

The large round leaves of the cowfoot or Santa Maria bush (M.: *sikatara*; S.: *kalamata*) enter into poultices for a swelling of the flesh, while spider webs are applied to wounds in order to stop bleeding. Wild honey is also used in medicine.

PRESUMED CAUSE OF DISEASES.—The cure of the sick is practically always left to the sukya; the latter is generally a clever herbalist, and the treatment applied by him is often excellent, but the remedy in itself is considered of no avail unless certain rites are observed by the healer as well as by the patient.

According to these primitive people, indigenous diseases and accidents are always due to the agency of some evil spirit (M.: *lasa*; T., P.: *walasa*; U.: *nawal*) under whose power the sick person is supposed to be. The mischief-maker may send a snake or a jaguar to harm the intended victim, or cause a tree to fall upon him, or cause his canoe to upset, or bring about some other calamity and ill luck. Thus toothache is supposed to be caused by a worm (M.: *sûkri*, *sisi*) that has been sent by these evil powers to bore the tooth. People walking in their sleep are said to be possessed by demons. Epilepsy is also caused by the temporary possession of the individual by such evil spirits; hence fits are called by the Miskito *wisna prukaya* "to be beaten by the devil." For the cure of this disease a decoction prepared from the *kisauri* herb is said to be very efficacious.

This evil influence may be counteracted through the agency of the sukya who manages to exorcise the spirit from the sick and then brings about a complete cure.

DIAGNOSIS.—Through the use of narcotics, especially the excessive use of tobacco, the sukya throws himself in a condition of wild ecstasy, and goes into trances and hypnotic states. During such an abnormal condition he is supposed to be in relation with friendly spirits whom he had invoked previously, and who reveal to him the source of the illness and the mode of cure.

HEALER'S INSIGNIA.—The insignia or kickshaws of a sukya during a cure are three or four black hardwood sticks with carved heads and several magic stones and dolls or manikins of white tunu cloth. Stone axes, which are regarded as thunderbolts, figure also among the

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paraphernalia of these doctors, small specimens being considered more efficacious than large ones. One of these celts is wrapped around the aching part of the body in order to relieve pain. In case of stomachic troubles the sukya administers drinking water wherein such a celt had been deposited for some time.

TREATMENT.—The sukya heals generally in the dark, especially after sundown. His methods of approach are prescribed by custom. First he imposes a general fast or perhaps only minor restrictions in diet on the patient, and occasionally on some of the latter's near relations likewise. Food which the patient is allowed to eat is known as *byfinka* (M.) and *kuñ* (S.). Sometimes the sukya ties a knotted cord round the legs, arms, breast, or neck of the patient, and the latter must abstain from the use of certain food, from salt and chili pepper, and observe continence for as many days as there are knots in the cord.

The cure proper consists in whistling over the sick person, blowing tobacco smoke over him, and massaging and sucking the afflicted body parts. The sukya purifies the drinking water, or any other beverage intended for the patient, by exposing it to the dew for some time, and then blowing into it with a bamboo rod or a tobacco pipe so as to produce bubbles. Painted sticks of hardwood are stuck in the ground around the bed of the sick person in order to keep evil spirits away. The sukya walks or dances around the sick bed, singing or muttering mysterious and incomprehensible words which are supposed to belong to the "spirit language." If a remedy does not seem to do any good, the sukya tries another one, just as does his learned confrère in more civilized countries.

Nobody must pass to windward of the house where the patient is undergoing a treatment, as one would kill the latter by "robbing him of air and breath." Should these orders be trespassed the sukya will exact a fine from the guilty ones. A woman *encinta* or with an infant must also keep out of sight as she might cause the death of both patient and sukya; these same restrictions apply also to any person of either sex having assisted shortly before at a burial.

Should the sick person not become any better, or even die eventually, the sukya will claim that his instructions had not been carried out carefully. Generally he ascribes such a calamity to disobedience in food restrictions. The actual or presumed breach of the above-named injunctions affords a convenient loophole for lack of success in the treatment.

Surgical operations are sometimes practiced by the sukya with the aid of splinters from broken glass bottles or bones, and chips of flint or obsidian. As antiseptics he uses ashes, tobacco, beeswax, and gums from certain trees.

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liquid to the people present, but none of them dares to inspect it, not being immune from its effects as are the poison doctors and the foreigners. During the last two decades the fear of buried poison has spread to the Tawira-Miskito and to the Sumu; these Indians believe that the Miskito from Rio Coco are especially dangerous on account of their habit of killing their enemies with the aid of buried poison. Certain charms, as, for instance, the bitter antidote bean (*Fevillea cordifolia*), are occasionally carried to ward off the effects of such witch poison. 755

DREAMS.—The Indian pays great attention to dreams (M.: *yapri sûkkan;* T., P.: *amana;* U.: *amiâna*). When he dreams that he has killed plenty of game he is certain to have good luck in the chase on the following morning. If he dreams of an accident he refuses to leave the settlement during the next few days. When he dreams of strangers, he expects a visit in the near future. The sukya, while curing a sick person, invokes friendly spirits in order to obtain from them during the dream information regarding the nature of the illness. 787

HAUNTED TREES.—The silk-cotton tree (see Religion, etc.) and the various species of figs (*Ficus* sp.), especially the giant chilamate or higuero, are said to be haunted. The Indians and Creoles believe that these fig trees flower only during the night and hold the fig to be the true fruit. Any one daring to go under the tree about midnight will be able to see the blossom and after that will be favored with good luck in anything he may attempt. This belief is shared by the ignorant Ladinos, who claim that the fig trees flower only on Good Friday night and that a blanket spread under them at midnight will be covered with small blossoms on the following morning. 824 [777]

MAGIC AND SORCERY: SUKYA, OKULI, SPIRITIST, OBEAH OR VOODOOISM

SHAMANS IN GENERAL.—Among these credulous people a great influence is exercised by the shamans, of which there were formerly only two categories, the *sukya* and the *okuli*. Of the latter there should be only one at a time, but of the former there is one in almost every larger village. In recent years two other sorts of shamans, the *spiritist* and the *obeah man*, have appeared on the coast. 756

These shamans play a great rôle in the life of the Indians, for they act as medicine men, doctors (see Hygiene: Diseases and their cure), augurs, conjurers, magicians, wizards, diviners, rain makers, spell-binders, priests, preachers, teachers, guides, advisors, counsellors, depositaries of tribal traditions, and the like. Their opinions were formerly of the greatest weight in tribal assemblies. Still, there is nothing characteristic about them in the way of ornament or dress,

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and they are not to be distinguished in their outward appearance from the ordinary mortals.

According to Miskito traditions their art was introduced by a white man from the east, known as *Almuk-awra* (lit.: "old drift man"), who was apparently some sort of culture hero. This reminds of the Mexican myth dealing with *Quetzalcoatl*, who also came from the east and was likewise a shaman. The first Sumu shaman is said to have been a man named *Ado* or *Mamaŝ* [80] (Grossmann, b: 4).

THE SUKYA.—This is the name of the lowest of the two kinds of sorcerers found originally among the Miskito and Sumu. The name is also current among the neighboring tribes, as the Paya and the Rama, although the indigenous designations for the priest-doctor in these two languages are respectively *wata* and *turmala*. The term sukya (sukia, suquia) [81] is also employed by the Mova and the San Blas Indians of Panama, and likewise occasionally by the Talamanca of Costa Rica. In the dialects of the Talamanca region, however, the native name is *tsukur* (or *tsugur*, *tsugru*, *tsugrūk*, *tsuku*). In the various Costa Rican languages the elements *tsu* or *ču* mean "to drink" or "to suck," and they occur in words which may be translated by "milk," "female breast"; this is also the case with other Central American languages, as Maya-Quiché, Paya, Mixe-Zoque, Lenca, Xinca, Sumu, and Guaymi-Dorasque. It would appear, therefore, that the word sukya is etymologically related to the above terms, and that originally it meant something like "sucker," as the native medicine man extracts the material cause of the pain or ill being by the action of sucking.[82]

The sukya is generally a man above the average Indian in intelligence.[83] His office is generally hereditary, but frequently he is succeeded by his nephew or his son-in-law. In practically every large village of the Miskito and Sumu habitat there is a sukya to be found; Wickham (c: 207), however, did not observe any such sorcerer among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido. The sukya communicates with the unseen powers [84] and may use his art to the welfare or destruction of

[80] *Mamaŝ* is, however, the Sumu name for "mother."

[81] The first mention of this name is found by M. W. (300, 302, 304, 306, 307, 308, 309) in the form *succhea*.

[82] See Rudolf Schuller, Las Lenguas Indígenas de Centro América. San José de Costa Rica, 1928 (pp. 53–54).

[83] Occasionally the sukya is an elderly woman. A young woman is, however, not qualified for this office, as she would be exposed too much to the influence of evil spirits and other supernatural dangers, especially at the menstrual period and at childbirth.

[84] Dampier (I, 9) already states that the devil, called *Wallasaw* (=*walasa*, *wlasa*, or *lasa*) by the Miskito, appears to their priest when they desire to speak to him on urgent business. M. W. (308), who writes a little later, that is, about 1699, spells that word *wallasee*.

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ordinary mortals. Thanks to these supposed powers, he is feared and respected far and wide. Such a state of affairs is occasionally very injurious to the Indian community as a whole, but in general abuses on the part of the sukya are not common. 756

Besides curing the sick, the advice of the sukya is sought in many instances. He is consulted in order to find out the whereabouts of a lost or stolen object, and he furnishes remedies to cure ill luck, to influence the heart of a person of the opposite sex, to increase the valor and courage of a man, and the like. He will inform the hunter how to proceed in order to secure plenty of game, for he has generally a good knowledge of the instincts and habits of animals. If he is unsuccessful, he claims that his client has transgressed some prescription. 756 787

Some of these shamans have some knowledge of astronomy; others imitate the voice of other persons or of animals and birds, and some appear to be clever ventriloquists. They foretell the death of a sick person, and help artificially by means of poison on the specified day, in order to strengthen their reputation. 756

The sukya will also be asked to harm an enemy by casting an evil spell over him. The usual method followed by the Miskito sukya is to fire a gun in the direction of the person upon whom he wishes to inflict injury. His Sumu confrère will send disease or death by mistreating or stabbing an object, usually a doll or puppet (M.: *yapti;* S.: *ditaina*), made of white tunu bark, and supposed to represent the intended victim. Some of these sorcerers are also said to transform themselves into a snake or jaguar and then harm their enemy. 756 754

There are good and bad sukyas, who are sometimes at feud with each other. In his own village the sukya is generally said to be good, but in the neighboring settlement there is a bad one, whom he has to fight and send away the evil spirit which the latter despatches in order to cause disease and death. The bad sukya will, for instance, send an animal or bird with poison to the neighboring village, but his confrère from the latter settlement sees it coming and sends it back. The animal goes hither and thither, until finally the "stronger" of the two opponents wins.

INITIATION OF THE SUKYA.—The choosing of his career by the sukya is supposed not to be voluntary. A person whom destiny has picked out for this high office is said to come under the influence of some spirits, from whom he is unable to deliver himself. During the night he acts like an insane person; he gets up from bed and talks with invisible beings in a mysterious "spirit" language. 756 776

In this state he makes prophecies, and if these come true his friends will urge him to become a sukya. He then prepares himself for his career through fastings, vigils, and other means of achieving exhaustion and the novice will be reduced to a skeleton. During this

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time he will come under the influence of some sort of tutelary spirit which henceforth will act as his protector; this may be the spirit of a person, animal, plant, hill, cloud, star, etc., or some other kind of supernatural being, by whose intermediacy the would-be sukya may converse with the evil spirits. This conception of guardian spirits is found in large areas of America, and it has probably not originated from the tutelary angel of the missionaries.

The candidate is then ready to exercise his profession, but on the day of initiation his food must be prepared according to a manner prescribed by custom. It must be cooked by a young boy or girl, not yet arrived at the age of puberty; a slender hardwood tree, called *liwoñ*, which grows very sparsely in the forest and burns readily in the green state, must be used as firewood.

The sukya is obliged from time to time to strengthen his powers by religiously abstaining from certain food and sexual intercourse, and in other ways lead a life of self-denial.

Among the Sumu any candidate for priestly and medical honors must perform the fire dance; this fiery ordeal must also be repeated occasionally in order to strengthen the connection with the unseen powers. A big pile of *liwoñ* wood is made in a cleared spot in the bush and the whole is covered by a thick layer of bijagua leaves. Fire is then put to the whole, and when in full blaze, the sukya issues from the forest. He has the whole body smeared with black paint, and is entirely naked save for a loin cloth. He then walks upon the pile and remains there standing quietly until the wood is partly consumed. Then he orders the fire divided into four parts, and walks from one pile to the other with his bare feet until all the wood is burned. Strangers are never allowed to witness this performance. The Miskito greatly respect the Sumu sukya for this act which their own sorcerers are unable to perform.

Roberts states that the fire dance is also done by the sukya of the San Blas Indians (Panama), and that the effects of the fire are resisted by some powerful antidote extracted from vegetable fibers. This ordeal is also performed by the shamans of Raiatea (Society Islands), Kandavu (Fiji Islands), and of a tribe in British India, but it has apparently not been observed in other parts of the world.

THE OKULI.—The okuli[85] is the highest shaman among the Miskito and there never should be more than one at a time. The Sumu do not have any sorcerer ranking above the sukya, but many of them recognize the okuli of the Miskito.

The okuli is said to be a special representative of *Alwani*, the thunder-god, or of *Aubiya* (or *Prahaku*), the lord of the air, and is supposed to control the elements. He is much more powerful than

[85] Among the Bribri Indians of Costa Rica *oko* is the name for a sort of shaman.

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the sukya, and he does not require the four black sticks, indispensable to the latter, while curing the sick. His powers are imparted to him, while in a state of unconsciousness, after having been struck by lightning. He is then able to make prophecies and to give other proofs of his aptitude for the high office, whereupon the prominent sukyas acknowledge him as their okuli. It is not absolutely necessary for him to have been a sukya himself. 756 ●

The last true okuli lived at Kum, a large Miskito village on the lower Rio Coco, where he died about 1895. He was known by the name of *Pase-yupti* "Mother (or Goddess) of the Wind," and I was unable to learn his real name. Shortly before his death he said that Lauro, the present okuli, was to be his successor. The latter had not actually been struck by lightning, but lightning had struck into a coco palm adjoining his house in Sandy Bay, and he personally became unconscious as a result of the fright. Lauro was still a member of the Moravian Church in those days, and for that reason he refused to accept the office offered to him upon the death of *Pase-yupti*. But finally, yielding to the pressure from the heathen Miskito, he began to assume the duties of the okuli. Lauro, however, resents the latter name, for he pretends to be a good Christian; he calls himself merely "prophet," and ascribes his supernatural powers to the grace of God.

Lauro is a very pleasant man, who was about 55 years old when the writer visited him in Sandy Bay in 1921. He has a slight admixture of Negro blood, but pretends to be a pure Miskito Indian. According to Mr. Danneberger, the Moravian missionary at Sandy Bay, he leads apparently a very clean and moral life. Although excluded from church membership, he frequents the Moravian church at Sandy Bay, and insists upon all his relations doing the same.

It is claimed by the Indians that Lauro has to quench his thirst exclusively on coconut water, and that a big flood would come and inundate the whole country should he ever take a single drop of ordinary water. Every year at the beginning of September he holds a day of prayer, when no one is allowed to travel nor to do any outside work. He then repairs to the sea at Sandy Bay, accompanied by a small child, and wades into the water up to the waist, praying and offering food to the elements, in order to keep them under his control. Every year his agents travel all over the coast to the Indian villages in order to collect money for Lauro, and many of the Christianized Indians pay the small amount asked for, so that the "prophet" should continue exerting his influence to keep hurricanes and floods away from the country. No Indian dares trespass his orders, and even some white foreigners have paid money to his agents.

When the Indians from Sandy Bay wish to undertake a voyage to the neighboring Mosquito Cays in order to catch turtle, they first consult Lauro with regard to the weather and the outlook for a good

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catch. To most Indians the okuli is the greatest man on earth; they do not dare say anything against him, for he knows everything that goes on, no matter how far away he is.

THE SPIRITIST.—A new movement, not unlike the nyalism among Jamaican Negroes, has appeared among the Christianized Miskito during the last 40 years. While engaged in fervent prayers, either in church or at home, certain people suddenly begin to act like mad; they shiver over the whole body, run and dance around, give out loud screams, and by other means seek to attract attention.

They claim that at such periods they have no control over their actions, and that the latter are due to the presence of the Holy Ghost in themselves. For this reason they are known among the Miskito as *pirit-upliku* "spirit men." While in this state of ecstasy they are supposed to be able to cure the sick by laying hands upon them. They also pretend having revelations from God during their dreams.

Although excluded from church membership by the Moravians, the spirit men or spirit women, for the female sex is not excluded from this office, frequent the churches. They pretend to be good Christians, and their influence is very great among the Christianized Miskito. The movement has, however, not had many followers among the Sumu. In certain districts the spiritists cause more trouble to the work of evangelization than to their heathen confrères, the sukyas. Although attributing the results of their cures directly and solely to the will of God, some of these spiritists make use of native herbs, of which they have a crude knowledge.

OBEAH OR VOODOOISM.—The belief in obeah (obia) was brought over from Africa by the slaves, and it still exists among the ignorant Creoles and the immigrated West Indian Negroes. The Blacks from British Honduras are especially noted as great obeah or voodoo men.

Feathers, bones, colored rags, thunderbolts (stone axes), and small bottles filled with insects and powdered earth, belong to the paraphernalia of these shamans, whose mode of working their spells does not differ essentially from that of the Indian sukya. Some of the obeah men from Jamaica or British Honduras have become sukya upon settling among the Indians of the Mosquito Coast.

The obeah men are much feared by the Creoles, Negroes, and Indians, as they are supposed to inflict bad luck, disease, and death upon an enemy. When some one is suffering from a lingering malady it is said that obeah is "on" him. His only recourse is to go to an obeah man, who will remove the evil for the payment of a sum of money. This sort of sorcery is, indeed, a very profitable business. Should the sick person die, however, the obeah man will claim that his instructions have not been carried out.

same way that manioc is planted. Some of the tribes recount a myth of a great flood. The *Sicuque* believe in two benevolent deities and a female god of evil. No offerings are made to the "good" deities, but attempts are made to placate the "evil" one, a female who is responsible for all misfortune and who causes death.

The *Sumo* and *Mosquito* and possibly the *Paya* believe that after death the soul makes its way eastward over a difficult route to a nether world of plenty and happiness. The description of the route traveled and the acts performed by the survivors of the deceased to aid the progress of his soul on this road differ from tribe to tribe. Under certain conditions the soul may remain about the house of the deceased and even occupy his former belongings, including domestic animals. For this reason these things must be destroyed.

The *Sumo*, *Mosquito*, and *Paya* believe that the world is populated with innumerable spirits. These haunt hills, caves, deep pools of water, and other places, and they are responsible for most misfortunes including sickness and death. A large part of the work of shamans is to placate these spirits, to drive them out of sick people, and otherwise to destroy them. Protection from the bad spirits is afforded by amulets and charms.

SHAMANISM

Most *Sumo* and *Mosquito* settlements have a shaman, who may take part in secular affairs but whose chief duty is to cure the sick. Shamans possess some spiritual power, but very little is known of the various rituals through which it is acquired. Sons and sometimes sons-in-law may succeed a shaman. Curing varies in detail according to the individual shaman and the spirits addressed. A shaman goes into a trance in which he contacts the spirits and, in one way or another, drives them out of the afflicted person. Curing rituals also include songs, dances, and the use of painted sticks, carved figures, and other paraphernalia. Some diseases are cured by the imposition of diets, the prohibition of sexual intercourse, and other restrictions. Complicated diseases or village-wide epidemics are isolated and receive special medical and ceremonial treatment. Infections, snake bites, and diseases such as malaria are cured by both shamans and laymen, the latter using infusions of herbs and a large number of native medicines. Steam baths followed by a cold plunge are also employed. Baths in hot springs and partial burial in hot sand are common practices, especially among the *Sumo*. When surgery is necessary a shaman employs knives made of obsidian, flint, bone, and such. Ashes, tobacco, wax, and resin are used as antiseptics.

A shaman may also prophesy the future or determine the route hunters should take in order to find game. By conjuring, a shaman may cause harm to come to people. A shaman may be retained by a person to eliminate an enemy.